

As of now, roughly three-fourths of this mission has been performed, and we are met here today to begin planning the fourth and final stage of the undertaking. In these circumstances, our duty is clear. We know that the success or failure of the charge given to us by the people may well depend upon what we, as their agents and servants, do within these halls during the next thirty days. During this brief time, therefore, we must search for wise decision and proper courses of action if we are to discharge the heavy responsibilities laid up on our shoulders by the people who elected us.

I have asked you to assemble at this joint session today so that I may lay before you for your appraisal some of the proposals I have for the successful operation of the State government for another year. It is clearly the intent of our constitution that these short sessions of the general assembly be devoted primarily to consideration and adoption of a budget. Our main effort for the next thirty days, therefore, will be directed toward the formulation of a sound fiscal policy and the adoption of a stable financial program under which our state will carry on its functions for twelve months beginning next July 1. But in this respect, the constitution is not all-restrictive, and latitude is provided for the enactment of legislation deemed necessary for the well-being of the people of the state as a whole. Some legislation of that nature in my opinion is required at this session.

My budget plan, together with the remainder of my legislative program will be summarized for you later during the course of this address. But first I should like to discuss with you certain factors which may influence the decisions we make at this legislative session.

May I begin by reporting that from my own observation, and from the reports I have received the general condition of our state is healthy and strong. It has been particularly encouraging to observe the vigorous comeback our state has made from the recession which held it in throes through a part of last year. We began last year at the very bottom of the recession, when, in February, employment declined to a low point of 1,016,200 and unemployment jumped to a peak of 94,500, representing 8.5 per cent of the labor force. The strength and the speed of the recovery we made are sharply drawn in the latest figures available—for last December—showing Maryland employment at a new high of 1,090,000 and unemployment as having dropped to 60,100. In other words, in December 74,000 more Marylanders had jobs and 34,400 fewer were out of work than in the preceding February.